

Hyderabad: Muslim Tragedy

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The Indian Empire under British rule was a complex of diverse political forms, religions, cultures, and social strata, diversely interrelated. These complexities have in general been subsumed under a higher unity. But a section of them pushed themselves roughly to the surface when the state of Hyderabad came to settle its affairs with the Dominion of India after the ending of the British Raj in August 1947. The barriers that divided India into religious communities, language areas, and economic classes ran heedlessly across Hyderabad's political frontiers, themselves anomalous. Virtually every inhabitant of the state was also a member of one or more other communities transcending Hyderabad both geographically and ideally. The several groups have variously contributed to, and been variously thrown about by, the swirl of events, which is the story of the sudden rearranging of the pattern of unity, both within the state and of Hyderabad within India.

Background Description

Lying around the heart of the Dakkhin plateau, squarely athwart the main north-south and east-west routes of India, Hyderabad covers some 82,000 square miles.¹ It had a population at the 1941 census of over 16 million. Of these 13%, or about 2 million, were Muslims; 81%, or about 13 million, were Hindus (or 64% if one excludes the 3

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¹Of the Indian States, only Kashmir was larger; but with one-quarter as many inhabitants.

million Untouchables from an enumeration of this community); and the remainder, about 1 million, were chiefly Christians and aboriginal tribes. Of India's eleven chief language areas, the state brought together, in a political embrace, a segment of each of three: Andhra, Maharashtra, and the Karnatak. About onethird of the first, the cultural and linguistic region of the Telegus, lay within Hyderabad, constituting the eastern half of the state and numerically a little over half of the population; it is known as Tilangana. The western half of Hyderabad was again more or less neatly divided into a northern area, whose 4 million Marathas constitute a sizeable corner of Maharashtra; and a southern, where live 2 million of the Karnatak's 12 million Kanarese. Of the Muslims, most speak Urdu, often in addition to a regional language.

Hyderabad was the major area in India where a political and social structure from medieval Muslim rule had been preserved more or less intact. The present ruler, the Nizam, owed not only his position, but also to some extent his boundaries, his predominantly Muslim ruling group around him, and so on, to the exploits and circumstances of his ancestor Asaf Jah, early 18th-century founder of the dynasty. The latter, one-time governor under Awrangzeb, in the days when the Mughul Empire was disintegrating, carved out for himself what feudal domain he could and ruled it as the Muslim feudal lords did rule in those days — not without the help of some Hindu nobility. His domain and his family have undergone vicissitudes in the two hundred years since, with now the Mughuls, now the British, now the Congress, ruling in Delhi; and now this, now that enemy at the gates. Yet the domain and its rulers persisted, in substance unchanged. This continuity itself has made part of the recent problem: it is not too fanciful an abstraction to view the turmoil of the past two years as Hyderabad's abrupt adjustment to a metamorphosis of conditions for which the rest of India has had many decades and Europe, on a vaster scale, some centuries.

At the head of the social order stood the Nizam, absolute ruler, and inordinately rich. Whether his repute as the world's wealthiest individual was valid is a question whose answer depends on how one estimates his unaudited reserves, and on how one reckons wealth; but in any case, besides his handsome official income from the state exchequer and his amassed treasures, he personally owned more than 5 million acres of his state's land. There is not much evidence to suggest that his personality rose above the level of moral quality to which, throughout history, such a background has tempted dynastic rulers. Around him was an aristocracy of some 1,100 feudal lords who together with him not only owned but privately administered, in major cases with their own police and legal systems, a patchwork of landed estates tilled by 4 million tenants, and making up in all 26,000 square miles. Mention should be made, too, of the modern counterpart to the aristocrat: the big industrialist. Hyderabad

had a handful of these, mostly Muslims, with two or three operating on a very big scale.² The State held, as a rule, 50% or more of the capital in important enterprises, a device which enabled the Nizam to keep and extend his control of affairs, as well as his wealth, and to subsidize chosen — normally Muslim — entrepreneurs.

Next in the social structure came the administrative and official class: government servants, whose social importance and relatively high incomes were characteristic of the whole Indian scene. Again, these were chiefly, but not entirely, Muslims. A significant proportion of them were recruited from among Indians outside the state. The upper ranks of these officials numbered perhaps 1,500. The army officer group was similarly composed.

The lower strata of government employ were also manned predominantly by Muslims; it was tacitly recognized, for instance, that the office of government errand boy or copyist was virtually the prerogative of the less well-to-do Muslims. In India the practice of son following father in trade and social status, with certain employments the monopoly of certain social groups, was not only established but, for the majority, sacred. The Muslims in Hyderabad formed, as it were, an upper caste. Shopkeepers, merchants, and the like, were of both communities. Lawyers and others in the professions were predominantly Hindu; while education, reflecting the Islamic culture of the state, was largely in Muslim hands.

Underneath all these groups stood (or stooped) the mass of the people: the usual peasantry of India, poor and long-suffering.³ The Muslim community included relatively few of these. The 20,000 villages of Hyderabad, as villages elsewhere in India, housed four-fifths of the population; but somewhat over half the Muslims lived in the state's five cities or its 118 towns. Many were petty industrial workers; and both in town and countryside a large number of Muslims were wretchedly poor.

Numerically, then, there were many exceptions to the principle that the Muslim community formed the ruling class. Nonetheless that principle stood; for the individuals who did compose the ruling class of the state were mostly Muslims, and their rule had a distinctive and deliberate Islamic tinge. All members of the Muslim community could, and almost all of them to varying degrees did, participate psychologically in that dominance. Moreover, the exploited, often desperate, Hindu poor could, and to varying degrees many did, include the entire Muslim group, poor and rich, in their resentment against the ruling class that dominated them. The scattering of Hindus in the landed aristocracy accepted the dominant Islamic nature of the state, content personally to be enjoying their immensely rewarding participation

²The principal industries in the state were engineering, and cotton and tobacco mills.

³The chief agricultural products of Hyderabad were cotton, tobacco, millet, wheat, rice peanuts.

in the coterie.

Culturally, the state did achieve a certain unity. As India, for all its diversity, had an over-all cultural homogeneity, so on a smaller scale Hyderabad had elaborated a certain distinctive cultural pattern, of which at its best Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, for instance, was representative. Nonetheless, such unity was not strong or profound; and added only slight significance to the bare political unity. Few of the state's subjects were Hyderabadis primarily. The Muslim was more conscious of belonging to the Muslim community scattered throughout India, concentrated in Pakistan, and stretching far across the world. The Telugu-speaking Hyderabadis was increasingly conscious of his part in Andhra. Peasants often felt more allegiance to class than to regional loyalties; many Hindus thought of themselves primarily as "Indians."

The political structure of the state was superficially simple, all power being vested in the Nizam. He ruled, of late years, with the help of an Executive Council (his "Cabinet") appointed and dismissed by himself; and of an Assembly, little more than advisory in function, partly elected on a carefully limited franchise but with a slight majority appointed by the Nizam. There were Hindus, Parsis, Christians, Depressed-class representatives, and other non-Muslims in both the Council and the Assembly; but they were never in a majority. The Prime Minister was always a Muslim, often from outside the state.

Political Parties

Political activity in Hyderabad had no long history, though of recent years a certain keenness had increasingly replaced a former quiet that approached apathy. However, by 1947 various political parties existed. In the nature of the case, their only possible activity was agitation. Four organizations may be noted, each being related, at least in principle, to a major political body outside the state: Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Communist Party, and Muslim League respectively.

The Hyderabad State Congress was formed in 1938. Its inception at that point represents the fact that there was spreading to the Native States, for the first time in serious proportions, that Indian nationalism which after a long history had just triumphed in the 1937 provincial elections. The Hyderabad State Congress, like Congress parties in other states, was not directly affiliated to the Indian National Congress; and in fact its announced program was local only, aimed at attaining responsible government within the state under the Nizam. However, it and similar organizations in other States had the vigorous moral support of the national party, shared a common ideology, and recognized that the wrenching of power from their

local autocrats and the ejection of the British Raj from India were interwoven, if not identical, problems. They were federated in the All-India States' Peoples' Congress, of which in 1939 Jawaharlal Nehru was president. The Hyderabad Congress's first act was to launch a *satyagraha*, or civil disobedience, movement. The Nizam, of course, tried to crush it, with the usual police procedure. The organization was banned a few months after being founded, and remained illegal until 1946. The Nizam, however, made in 1939 the concession of slight reforms in the constitution.

The Congress movement was largely Hindu, both in membership and in ideology. This was inevitable, in the circumstances, since the populace was overwhelmingly Hindu arithmetically, and also any transfer of power, however slight, from the Nizam and his mainly Muslim ruling class to democratic institutions meant to that extent the circumscribing or ending of predominantly Islamic rule. Both communities were quite aware of this; and both exacerbated the tension. The Nizam, in suppressing the Congress, charged it with being communal; as a matter of fact, when its leaders were thrown into jail the direction of the *satyagraha* movement was taken over by the parties which were communal by profession: the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha.

Of the Arya Samaj and Mahasabha movements, here lumped together for our purposes, this further must be mentioned: that the anti-Muslim sentiment which they represented and fanned was particularly strong in Marathwara, the northwest quarter of the state. The populace there shared with their fellow Marathas in adjoining parts of Bombay Province romantic anti-Muslim traditions going back to Shivaji, a 17th-century hero who had founded not only a kingdom but a great popular movement on the basis of explicitly Hindu resistance to the increasingly Muslim rule of the later Mughul Empire. This was the area that produced the fanatical Godse to assassinate Gandhi.

The next organization to be noted is the Andhra Mahasabha, also known as the Andhra Sangham⁴ — in effect, the Communists. During the 'thirties, each of the three main linguistic areas of Hyderabad had its cultural society, led by liberals, but in touch with the villages. Those of the Karnatak and Maharashtra do not concern us, though all three organizations found themselves to some extent being used as channels for the expression of the growing political discontent after the State Congress had become illegal. The Andhra Society leapt into prominence when Communist leaders, some of them former left-wing members of the Congress executive, having formed a state Communist Party in 1940, began to work through it and thereby to

⁴Both phrases are Sanskrit for "Andhra Association" or "Society." Not to be confused with the Hindu Mahasabha (often called simply "the" Mahasabha), which means "Hindu Association."

organize the Telangana peasantry. It so happened that in this particular case the response was very large indeed; and by the end of World War II the Communists were, through this organization, leading about the largest and for a brief moment perhaps the most effective peasant uprising in Asia outside of China. Village after village, especially in two administrative districts called Nalgonda and Warangal, on the Madras border, in 1943–44 refused to obey landlords' orders, to supply forced labor, or to pay taxes and rent. The state military and police descended on them with brutality, but somehow the peasants managed to throw them off.

The last political party to be noted is Muslim. In 1927, as a cultural organization, the Majlis-i-Ittihad-ul-Muslimin⁵ — popularly known as “the Ittihad” — was formed. Over the years it became increasingly political, reflecting within Hyderabad the developing all-India communalism of the Muslim League. Riding this wave of feeling, a fanatically communal lawyer, Qasim Razavi, ousted the former president who was attempting a political pact with the local Congress. Under Razavi's charge the organization fairly quickly became a militant and somewhat frenzied party, accused, not without cause, of being fascist in both spirit and structure. Most significantly, he created as an armed wing of the Ittihad a corps of “Razakar” Volunteers, ostensibly a sort of Home Guard to counteract Communist depredations, but in fact a major private army. They showed to themselves and others their ability to interfere with impunity in state politics, even to the extent of bearding the Prime Minister, in the disgraceful Dichpali mosque incident of 1946. The Ittihad's program was to “safeguard Islamic culture in the Deccan,” which soon came to mean resistance to any modification of the Muslim character of Hyderabad's rule, and even extension of the political and social power of its Muslim community. This became explicit in the solemn religious oath of the Razakar who, on joining, pledged his life to the leader and to “fight to the last to maintain the supremacy of Muslim power in the Deccan.” Under Razavi the Ittihad elaborated the doctrine that Hyderabad was an Islamic state, the Nizam being the representative and symbol of a sovereignty that pertained in fact to the Muslim community, and which he exercised on their behalf. Every Hyderabad Muslim, according to this view, became a participant, not only mystically but constitutionally, in the government of the State; and every Hindu became the subject not only of the Nizam, but virtually of all the Muslims. The middle and lower-class Muslims liked this idea with an increasing zeal.

The prospect of eventual British withdrawal from India had called forth from the protagonists varying attitudes regarding Hyderabad and the States question in general. The all-India Congress had long suggested, in general terms, that when

⁵Arabo–Persian: “Council of the Union of Muslims.”

the British Raj was finished, the princes would be finished with it; at the Haripura session (1938) it had forcefully asserted that *Purna Swaraj* (complete self-rule) must include the States, and that freedom there must be democratic. Gandhi later that year had warned the princes to be friendly with the Congress, since it might well soon replace the British as the ruling party. Nehru, speaking as president of the All-India States' Peoples' Conference in February 1939, and referring to the treaties which linked the States to "British imperialism," had said, "We recognize no such treaties and we shall in no event accept them."⁶

The Muslim League had taken pains not to consider the question. Jinnah, as part of his general policy of refusing, rather irately, to define Pakistan until the "principle" should be conceded, or to discuss any specific problems that partition would raise, had at first brushed aside the question when it was put to him. Eventually, in 1944, he explicitly stated that only British India was under consideration.⁷

The British Conservative Government — the princes' best friend — had long envisaged for India, according to Indian nationalists, no real freedom; according to themselves, an eventual independent state in which the Native States, under their ruling princes, would be powerful integral units.⁸ The Labor Government, once withdrawal was squarely faced and partition had been adopted, announced that the two dominions about to be created out of British India, and also the princely States, were to become fully independent. The process of transferring power was so swift that many details were not worked out. However, it does seem clear that the men at Westminster who framed the Independence Act of 1947, and the British Cabinet in general, did definitely have in mind that Hyderabad and other States were to be free to choose any one of the three alternatives: joining India, joining Pakistan, or becoming autonomous.⁹

⁶R. Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936–1942* (Oxford, 1943), p. 174.

⁷*The Jinnah–Gandhi Talks* (Karachi, 1944), pp. 22, 23.

⁸See the *Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928–29*. See also the Government of India Act, 1935. Opposition to the federal part of the Act was unanimous, and it was never implemented.

⁹The Act itself merely stated, negatively, that the suzerainty of His Majesty over the States, with all that the relation involved, explicit or otherwise, came to an end on August 15. The positive inference as to the States' becoming "masters of their own fate" (Listowel) was drawn by British officials — e.g., Attlee in the House of Commons; and Lord Listowel as follows in the House of Lords: "They will then be entirely free to choose whether to associate with one or other of the Dominion Governments or to stand alone." (*Hyderabad's Relations with the Dominion of India* [publication of the Nizam's government], Vol. I, p. 4). However, it is only fair to point out that, as this speech in fact goes on at once to show, the Labor Government meant freedom from pressure from Great Britain. It is perhaps also relevant to mention that Hyderabad's status had always been less free in practice than in theory, and that the Nizam more than once (e.g., 1919, 1926) had had his knuckles rapped by Britain for

The Nizam himself was rather put out that Great Britain was inaugurating a new age in India without consulting him. He apparently asked that he be allowed to keep Hyderabad within the empire as a separate dominion on its own, but this request was refused.¹⁰ In June 1947, a week after the British announced partition, he publicly declared that he would join neither dominion at the start, but would see how things developed. His contention was that Hyderabad could have been integrated with the old India as a whole, but could not be with either part of it, now that there were to be two dominions, until he saw how relations between these two would work out. In other words, his sympathy, as a Muslim ruler, with Pakistan precluded his acceding to India. He also repeatedly stressed that he was choosing independence to avoid communal riots.

The Standstill Agreement

With this much reference to background, we turn to a survey of the events in Hyderabad during the two years following August 15, 1947. The first period extends from Independence Day to the end of November 1947, when a Standstill Agreement was at last signed. In the case of most of the other Native States lying on what Delhi considered to be the Indian side of the Indo–Pakistan boundary, the new era of independence opened with standstill agreements or actual accessions already hastily negotiated with their rulers. In the case of Hyderabad negotiations had been carried on at Delhi in the weeks preceding August 15, but had failed to produce agreement. The Indian Government made it quite plain that it emphatically wanted and expected accession, involving full and overt Delhi control of the three subjects of defense, foreign affairs, and communications, but offering Hyderabad autonomy in other matters. What it had in mind, and more or less stated in so many words, was that Hyderabad's status should continue as it was before, but with Delhi replacing London as the supreme power. Even Hyderabad's "autonomy" would therefore be subject to Delhi's supervision. The Nizam's contention was that, with London now out of the picture, he himself became supreme; he envisaged a treaty between equals, regulating the three subjects; and offered "any form of association ... short of accession."¹¹ Both sides insisted on their respective positions, and no settlement

presuming to forget this.

¹⁰See the Nizam's letters to Mountbatten of July 9, 1947, and Aug. 8, 1947. *Hyderabad's Relations with the Dominion of India*, pp. 2, 5.

¹¹Letter to Mountbatten, Sept. 26, 1947. *Hyderabad's Relations with the Government of India*, Vol. I, p. 17; Government of India, *White Paper on Hyderabad*, Supplement, p. 8.

was achieved, Delhi meanwhile growing restless in the realization that “no settlement” was tantamount to Hyderabad’s slowly winning its separationist case. India therefore pressed for at least a Standstill Agreement recognizing the status quo until a fuller settlement should be arrived at. In slightly more than two months (October 18, 1947), a draft agreement was accepted in Delhi by both India and the Hyderabad delegation. The latter then went home to get the Nizam’s signature. Their failure to do so is basic to all subsequent developments.

The Nizam and his cabinet at first agreed to the terms of the Standstill Agreement, and on the morning of October 28 the delegation was to return by special plane to Delhi with the signed document. But the preceding midnight in Hyderabad city, trams and buses began to run, and crowds of Ittihad Muslims collected, listened to Qasim Razavi harangue, and finally staged a mass demonstration outside the state guesthouse, where the delegates were staying, and the palace of the Nawab of Chhatari, the Prime Minister. The police did nothing. The crowds, estimated at 50,000, threatened to burn the buildings; they had already disconnected telephones and electricity. The mob dispersed at dawn only after extracting a promise that the agreement would not go through. The Nizam took no action except that of quietly accepting Chhatari’s resignation and disbanding the negotiating committee.

The Nizam’s new delegation, composed of Razavi’s men, returned to Delhi but found Mountbatten adamant in refusing to alter even a comma of the previous draft; and in the end that agreement was in fact signed, on November 27. It was to remain in force for one year, without prejudice to the final relationship between the two parties. It provided for the temporary continuation, as between India and the Nizam, of “all agreements and administrative arrangements as to matters of common concern, including External Affairs, Defence and Communications” existing between Great Britain and the Nizam immediately before August 15; but expressly ruled out “paramountcy.” It also denied India the right to send or keep troops in Hyderabad; and provided for arbitration of disputes. By and large, the terms of the agreement seemed to favor the Nizam, but the very fact of the agreement was at least temporarily and somewhat belatedly a point in favor of India.

The background to these negotiations is important. The Delhi Government, in these months, was living through its weakest moment. Immediately after partition came the massive cataclysm of the Punjab and other riots, the open fighting in Kashmir, and all the internal instabilities of the new dominion. There seemed a real possibility of war with Pakistan, and of economic or administrative breakdown at home.

The Nizam, on the other hand, felt not weakness but strength. He saw August 15 as a date on which his autocracy had expanded. When the sense of triumph

which Indian independence brought to Hindu morale spilled over into Hyderabad, he frustrated it, jailing those who tried to celebrate by flying the Indian tricolor. The State Congress, in an upsurge of the feeling that freedom had come but was not recognized, called for a new *satyagraha* movement, demanding accession to India. The Nizam replaced Sir Mirza Isma'il, his relatively liberal prime minister,¹² with the ex-Muslim-Leaguer Chhatari; and generally seemed to make it clear that it was the Ittihad, rather than the Congress, which was right in reacting to "independence" for Hyderabad — hence for its Muslim community — with ebullience. The success and impunity of their October 28 *putsch* still further encouraged them. Theirs was the sense of triumph; the counterpart of the dismay with which the incident was viewed in India and by local Hindus.

The seven months following the signing of the Standstill Agreement formed a period of protracted, ineffectual negotiation, culminating in the bathos of the near settlement of June 15, 1948. The background was one of mounting tension; both between the two governments and between the peoples concerned.

On the level of political forms, India's argument assumed that Hyderabad, like the other States, was in fact a part of India, although by an historical anomaly it was in theory a self-acting political unit. It must accede. The problem was simply that of working out a satisfactory formula by which it could adapt its theoretical status to the facts. India recognized the special circumstances, importance, tradition, and the like of the Nizam's government; this, it urged, was the reason why it had already conceded the Standstill Agreement, giving the State time and opportunity to accede with grace and dignity. But time was running out. To take advantage of the interlude to evade or even to postpone accession would be bad faith. India was not discussing whether Hyderabad would incorporate itself legally in India, but how and when it would do so.

The Nizam's government approached the negotiations in a quite different spirit. For it, the search was for a satisfactory formula that would express the admittedly close relation between the two states without sacrificing the sovereignty of either. On the time question, its tacit attitude was that the status quo would of course continue until a solution satisfactory to both sides had been found.

In effect, then, the negotiators made little progress toward any final settlement. Rather, they spent their time in mutual recriminations that the Standstill Agreement

¹²Sir Mirza Isma'il had succeeded Chhatari in 1946 after the Dichpali mosque incident. An able and broad-minded man, he had embarked on a large-scale policy of reforms; and had he been retained as Prime Minister, it seems reasonable to believe that the whole subsequent disaster could have been avoided. But the vocal Muslims in the state opposed him; and the Nizam's sympathies were with them, not him.

was being violated. Eventually, Hyderabad took the position that the dispute over the Standstill Agreement should be submitted to arbitration, as provided therein; India refused, retorting in effect that Hyderabad had so flagrantly violated the agreement in both letter and spirit that it could hardly appeal to it now. India would not countenance arbitration of questions not lying squarely on the road to accession; nor, in fact, of any question until that road was clearly being travelled.

Prior significance in this period lay with developments outside the official discussions. The chief background factor for India was the gradual surmounting by the Nehru Government of its initial monumental internal difficulties. Its growing strength was reflected in the increasingly domineering tone it adopted in the negotiations, a trend which tended to alienate rather than to daunt Hyderabad. Meanwhile, the Indian public was making felt through parliament its growing exasperation — in part deliberately kindled by Delhi's propaganda — with the Nizam and his policy and friends.

During 1948 India supplemented its political pressure with an economic blockade of Hyderabad state. There were also border raids, both from and into Hyderabad. These increased in frequency and depredation as the months went by. Both sides made detailed and fairly credible accusations against the other, and it seems probable that both were right in charging that the lower ranks, at least, of officialdom on each side were often implicated. The ideological war instigated the political groups — Congress on the India side, Razakar on the Hyderabad — to organize raiding bands. Advantage was taken of the lax situation also by adventurers and desperadoes, and by the Communists. The prevalence of these border incidents can readily be understood when one realizes not only the pitch of communal and other emotion that had been aroused, but also that the frontier of Hyderabad is not a single line: numerous enclaves of territory, both small and sizeable, dot the border area on both sides, and recall the original feudal nature of the state. Both Indian and Hyderabad police and troops had to penetrate each other's territory to perform their normal duties.

The Communists and the Razakars

Within Hyderabad itself, attention must be paid principally to Communist and Razakar developments. Both organizations thrived. In Telangana the Communists claimed at least 2,000 villages "liberated." "People's Independent Committees" (village soviets) were set up, and actually took over the running of a very extensive area: landlord and police control was broken, and peasant tribunals "liquidated"

many of the old functionaries. The Andhra Mahasabha, systematically and brilliantly controlled by the Communist Party, distributed land, cancelled debt, seized stocks of food, and generally won firm peasant backing. It also dispatched its opponents, which after February 1948 included the Congress forces as well as — some now said instead of — those of the Nizam.

The Delhi Government, afraid of Communism generally, was undoubtedly perturbed by this uprising; was said, even, to be seriously alarmed lest the whole of Andhra become India's Manchuria, a solid Communist base for operations against its own regime. A settlement, therefore, became the more urgent; yet Delhi hesitated to unseat the Nizam altogether and disrupt the status quo too radically, lest a complete social breakdown play into Communist hands. Similarly the Indian blockade could be only an interim measure, since if once really effective it could soon produce the economic breakdown Delhi wished at once to threaten but to avoid.

The Nizam seems to have figured that the Communists' success threatened India more than it did him; he tried to divert rather than to suppress their activities. He ascribed his loss of control to India's refusal to supply his state with arms; and claimed the emergency as vindicating the necessity of the Razakars.

The Nizam's government, the Indian Government, and the Communists each at some point accused the other two of working together. And to each was a measure of truth. After Independence, the Communist Party of India had given the Delhi Government a qualified, if divisive, support with the slogan that Nehru was progressive, Patel reactionary. But at the Second Party Congress at Calcutta, February 28 to March 6, 1948, it reversed this policy and subsequently attacked the entire bourgeoisie and its party — the Congress — as "collaborationist" (i.e., with the Western Powers). In Hyderabad, prior to the Second Party Congress, the Communists worked with and even in the State Congress against the Nizam, demanding accession to India. Later, they bitterly denounced both accession and the Government of India, declaring that real freedom could come only after the overthrow of feudalism, which capitalist Delhi would not effect. From this point, clashes between local Communists and Congressmen were violent. Delhi charged that there was a direct understanding between the Nizam and the Communists, not only in that the former was encouraging, even subsidizing, Communists within India (particularly in Madras Province) but also that there was actual cooperation within his dominion. On May 4, 1948, the Nizam's government in fact lifted the ban on the Communist Party, which instructed its "liberated" villages to resist Indian troops when these should come. To the Americans and British, in order to win support for, or at least acquiescence at the United Nations in, their coming "police action" in Hyderabad, the Delhi Government later played up this Communist menace; and indicated privately that it planned to retain

the Nizam and his group as a right-wing counterpoise to Communism.

The Razakar organization, meanwhile, was in full swing. The Nizam denied that it had government support. But its command of funds, arms, vehicles, and such scarce commodities as strictly rationed gasoline during the blockade, and the overt complicity of the minor authorities in its exploits, as well as the tacit approval of those higher up, made the denial unconvincing. Squads of armed Razakars terrorized villages, swaggered through the streets of the capital city, looted Hindu shops, raided railway trains, molested women, and generally took the law into their own hands. The police winked or applauded. Victims were written off as “Communists.” Strikingly little opposition to the Ittihad was forthcoming from the Muslim community. When a handful of older Muslims, retired officials, published a protest against the atrocities, they found themselves in trouble with the government, as well as with the Razakars. The Muslim editor of an unsympathetic paper was murdered as a “traitor,” while a few other Congress Muslims had to flee the state, as many Hindus were doing. But most Muslims, if not actually favorable, acquiesced.

Through this period the Hyderabad Congress, its leaders in jail, was still carrying on *satyagraha* for accession. As can be imagined, Hindu feelings were incandescent.

Relations outside of India

Two outside relations of the Nizam deserve mention. One was with Great Britain. He felt that he had the support of conservative groups in Britain, out of sympathy for his regime and/or antipathy to Delhi's. Secondly, he (and more especially Qasim Razavi, himself from northern India) believed that the Muslim world was behind him; particularly that Pakistan, and the Muslims of India — numbering about 35 million, after partition —, could be counted on for support. The two actions that most infuriated the Indian public during this period were the Nizam's loan of 20 crores (\$60,000,000) to Pakistan at a crucial moment;¹³ and Razavi's fantastic statement that all Muslims in India were a fifth column. Though not so baldly, the Nizam himself used a similar argument in warning of communal disturbances throughout India if he were ill-treated. Actually, the position of Muslims in India was already so precarious that the deteriorating Hyderabad situation was an extreme embar-

¹³The granting of the loan was made public on January 10, 1948, Hyderabad claiming that it had been arranged the previous autumn before the Standstill Agreement. This incident and the Communist successes, both largely propagandized, made dramatic to the Indian mind the threat represented by Hyderabad as a source of support “within” India to India's two principal enemies, external and internal.

rassment to them. Far from cheering for the Nizam, some of their representatives pleaded with the Hyderabad agent in Delhi to effect some settlement, lest they pay for the Nizam's intransigence.

Failure of further Negotiation

The official negotiations between the two governments made, as we have said, little visible progress toward a final solution. Presently India was rather telling Hyderabad how to behave — internally as well as externally. It demanded the breakup of the Razakar organization, for instance, and a little later the introduction of democratic government. However, on June 15, 1948, a new draft agreement was produced in Delhi, with two final and three interim provisions: the question of accession would be determined by plebiscite, and responsible government would be introduced following a Constituent Assembly established “early in 1949”; meanwhile, a government would be formed in consultation with the leaders of the major parties; Hyderabad would, on India's request, pass legislation similar to India's on defense, external affairs, and communications; and Indian troops might be stationed within the state if India constitutionally declared an emergency. India promised to call off its blockade and to help Hyderabad in a variety of ways if this agreement were accepted. The Nizam, however, refused to ratify the revised agreement. His professed reasons were that he wanted provision for arbitration, for more economic independence and for greater freedom to determine, himself, the composition of both the interim government and the Constituent Assembly (virtually, more scope for Muslim weightage); and that he would not agree to India's stationing of troops on its own decision.

India made it plain, both through a covering letter from Mountbatten to the Nizam and through Nehru's statement to parliament and his public speeches, that it regarded the June 15 draft as final. It must be accepted as it was; no further negotiation would be countenanced. It was an ultimatum — and was understood by Hyderabad as such: part of Hyderabad's complaint was precisely that India was dictating terms, and to enforce them was using, besides the now tightened blockade, both verbal and substantial threats of armed invasion. In other words, the dispute, at the theoretical level, remained exactly where it had always been: Hyderabad claimed to be an independent state, whereas the Delhi Government regarded it, and treated it, as a subordinate part of India.

Upsurge of the Razakars

During the three months that followed the rejection of the June draft, Delhi prepared for invasion, while Hyderabad did what little it could to prepare to meet it, including the sending of a belated appeal to the United Nations. The chief background development of the period was the growing Razakar domination of Hyderabad and the increasingly gruesome reports of this in India. These reports were often exaggerated, and in many instances fabricated, although the plain truth was distasteful enough. In any case, their effect, in an atmosphere already charged with Hindu–Muslim hatred, was provocative in the extreme.

Estimates of the numerical strength of the Razakars vary; the figure of 100,000 given by the Indian Government as a minimum, must be considered much too high. The organization consisted of trained and armed bands comprising brigand elements and bullies, and also frenzied religious zealots. They roamed the cities and eventually the villages, raping and looting, terrorizing and boasting, and dreaming wild Islamic dreams of Hyderabad-Muslim might. They talked of the day when the state would stretch to the Bay of Bengal; and seemed to think of the Nizam as becoming eventually the acknowledged ruler of all the Muslims of at least South India. They would go into a school and manhandle brutally a teacher for failing some Muslim pupil in an examination; or would burn down the house of some Hindu for reporting (however ineffectively) their depredations to the police. They had the important moral support of the individual members of the lower police and government ranks, who were of course chiefly Muslim, and of more and more of the civilian Muslim community, which was slowly losing its head.

At the top levels, Qasim Razavi was the public symbol, the flaming fanatic who had the popular devotion — slightly mad, perhaps. He was, however, but one of a half-dozen leaders: the others worked behind the scenes, and were perhaps more dishonest than deranged. One was in the palace circle, a close and long-standing confidant of the Nizam's; one or two got seated in the cabinet; one was chief of police. This last was able to frighten the Nizam into desired decisions by carefully presented reports that if he did not acquiesce the police could not be relied upon. One member of this directing group was a major industrialist, whose generous financial backing was important to the whole enterprise. There was also some suggestion that even Hindu monied interests supported the Ittihad for its anti-Communist value.

Into the Razakar organization were brought quite a number of Muslim “refugees” from outside the state, while many thousands of Hindus, dismayed or terrified by the Razakar regime, fled to the neighboring provinces. One of the wild ideas in Razavi's mind, following the immense exchange of populations in the Punjab in 1947,

may possibly have been that Hyderabad could become a Muslim state in population also, by attracting the Muslim minority from India and eventually driving out or outnumbering the local non-Muslims.

It is difficult to see what the Nizam and his advisers had in mind as an answer to the increasingly imminent invasion. The ordinary Muslims, carried away by their enthusiasm, told each other fantastic tales that the Nizam had scores of Lancasters poised at bases in Egypt and elsewhere ready to reduce Bombay, Madras, and Bezawada to shambles within hours; that if India should make a move, millions of Muslims there would rise and disorganize the country while Pakistan would triumphantly invade;¹⁴ that the United Nations would restrain and punish India; and, in the last resort, that God would save the Nizam and Muslim rule.

Invasion

On September 13, 1948, the Indian army, moving on five fronts, invaded Hyderabad; and in less than a week the conquest was complete. The Nizam's army, apparently more of an exhibition than a fighting force, offered negligible opposition. There were relatively few battle casualties except amongst Razakars and other Ittihad civilian volunteers, who threw themselves in as a rather pathetic but devoted resistance.

Off the battlefield, however, the Muslim community fell before a massive and brutal blow, the devastation of which left those who did survive reeling in bewildered fear. Thousands upon thousands were slaughtered; many hundreds of thousands uprooted. The instrument of their disaster was, of course, vengeance. Particularly in the Marathwara section of the state, and to a less but still terrible extent in most other areas, the story of the days after "police action" is grim.

The only careful report on what happened in this period was made a few months later by investigators — including a Congress Muslim and a sympathetic and admired Hindu — commissioned by the Indian Government to study the situation. The report was submitted but has not been published; presumably it makes unpleasant reading. It is widely held that the figure mentioned therein for the number of Muslims massacred is 50,000. Other estimates by responsible observers run as high as

¹⁴On the very day before the action began, the Hyderabad Government stated in its cable to the United Nations that invasion "is bound to cause unrestrained communal war throughout the Indian continent" — the latter phrase presumably including Pakistan. The following story, perhaps apocryphal but illuminating, is told: that the Pakistan Cabinet did discuss supporting Hyderabad, and was restrained by the statement of the present Governor General, himself from East Pakistan, that if Pakistan made a move not a Muslim would be left alive in Bengal. It should be noted, too, that the invasion came a few hours after Jinnah's death.

200,000, and by some of the Muslims themselves still higher. The lowest estimates, even those offered privately by apologists of the military government, come to at least ten times the number of murders with which previously the Razakars were officially accused.

Responsibility for the massacres and the accompanying terror is not easy to fix. The behavior of invading troops is seldom pretty; and in this instance the army personnel were emotionally involved in the communalism. However, the higher ranks did punish indiscipline, so that what there was of it was short-lived. In some instances it was charged that the invading army looked on while civilian reprisals took place. But the important point, apparently, was that police administration broke down, partly because of a collapse of morale on the part of the Muslims who constituted the force. The damage seems to have been done in the crucial days that elapsed between the invasion and the setting up of martial law. In some areas this was a matter of two or three days; in more outlying parts, control was re-effected only after a considerable period. No one questions the good faith of the military commander, who was, indeed, looked upon as an outstanding administrator for both his ability and his strict justice. But in this interval, the populace widely rose against the local Muslim petty officials, against individual Muslims who had been browbeating them, or just against Muslims as Muslims; and wreaked agonizing vengeance. In some areas, all the men were stood in a line, and done to death. Of the total Muslim community in Hyderabad, it would seem that somewhere between one in ten and one in five of the adult males may have lost their lives in those few days. In addition to killing, there was widespread rape, arson, looting, and expropriation. A very large percentage of the entire Muslim population of the Districts fled in destitution to the capital or other cities; and later efforts to repatriate them met with scant success.

Indian Military Administration

The Nizam, when India invaded, accepted the resignation of his cabinet; and when the Indian army was nearing his capital, acknowledged its commander as head of his new government, with himself still the constitutional head of the state. The military government took over the running of affairs, and remained in virtually dictatorial charge; responsible, of course, to Delhi. Its first task, as already mentioned, was restoring or imposing order.

The former cabinet, Razavi, many top officials, and all Muslims charged with being implicated in the worst aspects of the old regime (a few thousands in all) were arrested. Relatively few have been brought to trial. Restrictions, particularly on

property, were placed on a larger number, and several officials lost their jobs. Yet the administration was continued with much of the lower staff still intact. Only the top levels were non-Muslim, and predominantly non-Hyderabadi.

In the course of some months, the new government suppressed the Communist uprising in Telangana, though not without the combined weight of intensive military and police operations, some thousands of summary arrests, and the shooting of leaders out of hand. In the economic field the crown lands and private feudal estates of the top aristocracy were taken over, and a limited program of land-tenure reform was initiated for the smaller agriculturalist. Industrially and commercially, the same device of government control which had previously discriminated to help Muslims now operated on the whole against them.

Politically, the military administration aimed at a plebiscite to determine accession; at an elected assembly to determine a democratic constitution; and meanwhile at carrying on the government in an efficient and fair way.¹⁵ The invading troops had posed as an “army of liberation,” restoring peace and freedom to a stricken land. Certainly, when Nehru visited the state following the “police action,” he was welcomed with enthusiasm as a delivering hero by immense cheering crowds. Even constitutionally the theory was that the Nizam, now rescued from the grip of evil forces, was at last a free agent. He issued a formal statement denying duress; he had already withdrawn from the United Nations his complaint against India submitted while his previous government had been in office.¹⁶

¹⁵Since the above was written, the Nizam, in a *firman* (pronunciamento) issued November 24, 1949, presumably at Delhi's instigation, summarily announced that the Indian Constituent Assembly's new constitution for India would apply also to Hyderabad; but added that this decision was subject to ratification by the constituent assembly of the state.

¹⁶The progress of this case, though it had no influence on affairs in Hyderabad, may be briefly outlined here. On August 21, 1948, Hyderabad submitted to the UN a request that the dispute between itself and India be brought to the attention of the Security Council as a threat to peace. The request was circulated to the members, but the matter was not on the agenda at the next meeting (August 30). On September 12 the Hyderabad Government sent a further cable “earnestly requesting” that the complaint be considered at a meeting three days later. On the 13th, Indian troops marched; a further cable reported the fact. On the 16th, the Council met, the Hyderabad question constituting its provisional agenda. After much hesitation, and finally on the explicit understanding that such adoption was a necessary preliminary to, and not a decision on, the question of the competence of the Council to consider the case, the agenda was adopted. Hyderabad and Indian representatives were thereupon asked to state their case. The latter, arguing that Hyderabad was not competent to bring any question before the Council, asked for adjournment for five days “to present our documents”; this was granted. By that time, the occupation was complete, and the Nizam had sent new instructions withdrawing the complaint. Some of the smaller nations on the Council used strong language in denouncing India's action; but the discussion on whether the Nizam's withdrawal was valid,

Present Status of the Muslim Community

It would seem beyond all cavil that the new regime was both welcomed, and justly welcomed, by the great majority of the population of Hyderabad. Even for the Muslim minority, the regime is on paper fair, substantially undiscriminating. But it would, indeed, be hardly human if at least the lower Hindu officials took no advantage of their new power to deviate from the ideal of impartiality. More calamitous is the plight of the village Muslim, who probably was not personally implicated in Razakar activities, but, glad enough to escape with his life, lost his home and goods at the time of the invasion and has but the little man's chance of getting them back. On a larger scale, the entire Muslim community suffered at once from insecurity, from the social and economic revolution which dislodged it as the ruling class. The Muslims' status as a community had been intimately bound up with an antique social structure which was now being discarded. In the new society their problem is not that of being given a status that they can call unjust, but the difficulty of building up for themselves any status at all. The loss of privilege is itself a downfall, in which legal justice may go with economic disaster. No social revolution, however necessary or just, can fail to disrupt the group which it abruptly ousts from power. In theory, the Hyderabad Muslims in the new order took their place indiscriminately along with everyone else; in practice, they, who had been seated as it were on the platform, have had to find themselves places on the floor already fully occupied by firmly established, and defiant, crowds. Even in a democracy the position, economic and other, of a small minority depends not only on the justice of the laws but also on the degree to which that minority is accepted by the major group. And in Hyderabad, although the laws be democratic, society will be Hindu.

interwoven with that on whether he had been competent to complain in the first place, petered out in this (September 20) and the next (September 28) meetings. On October 6 Pakistan asked permission to participate the next time the question was discussed. On November 20 it sent a reminder. The matter then came up on November 25, but, crowded out, was postponed until December 15. On Pakistan's statement that its discussion would be lengthy, the matter was again deferred, to Lake Success (meetings since September 16 had been in Paris). On May 19 and 24, 1949, the matter was considered, India and Pakistan being heard — the former saying that all was now well and asking that the question, which was out of order anyway, be dropped from the agenda; the latter making a long and detailed charge against India before, during, and after the invasion, and suggesting that if the Council be in doubt as to the legal question of competence, that question be submitted, under the Charter, to the International Court. When these two had presented their cases, the Council adjourned without discussion; and the matter, though theoretically still on the agenda, has not again come up. The former Hyderabad delegate on August 18, 1949, wrote to the President of the Security Council submitting certain charges of maladministration in Hyderabad, particularly with regard to the alleged denial to Qasim Razavi of a proper trial.

Apart from the initial blow and the long-term readjustment to the loss of social integration and of function, the Muslims suffered also an inner dismay. It is too early yet to say whether this psychological upheaval may not prove in the end the most significant. It is part of the spiritual crisis through which Islam is passing in the modern world. The two chief factors in this crisis were both acute in the Hyderabad instance: the impact of an unassimilated modernity on an old-world way of life and its *Weltanschauung*; and the loss of power.

One wonders how the group, or anyway its leaders, could have lost their heads so starkly as they did before the invasion. Originally, the Nizam apparently felt that the British withdrawal from India, coupled with partition, would lead to chaos; and that out of the confusion he, with an army, wealth and prestige, stood a fair chance of emerging as a major power in a Balkanized India. The hope was not at first absurd, but should have faded within six months. After this, he made, as to power dynamics, a series of astonishing miscalculations, both internationally and in home affairs; until he allowed a vicious group of men within the state to acquire power to a point where he could no longer control them. He emerges as a clever man utterly destitute of wisdom. The Razakar leaders were ruthless fanatics and criminals who played for sordid stakes and lost. The mass of Muslims was poor and ignorant, leading lives in which there was little of significance except their religion and its social solidarity. They are traditionally gullible, ardent but easily misled. Several hundred thousand, however, had nothing to do with the Nizam or the Razakars; but the innocent, too, suffer for the mistakes of their community's leaders. The most significant blundering was that of the middle classes, the one group who might have saved the situation but failed utterly in both understanding and judgment.

Brought up in an isolated, anachronistic society, with a point of view that throughout much of the world would have seemed normal only a few centuries back, the Muslims of Hyderabad sincerely believed that their group's portion was to rule, the Hindus' portion to learn to be content. The Muslims reposed, too, a remarkably blind faith in the legal validity of their position, and it will be generally conceded that in the dispute with India, Hyderabad's case was on the whole considerably the stronger in law. Along with their false sense of traditional and legalistic security went perhaps the opposite — a subconscious fear. They were frightened by what, in the explosive weeks following partition, had happened to millions of their coreligionists in northern India; frightened, perhaps, by the awareness of what would happen to them, once they lost supremacy at home. Such a dread, growing more intense and irrational, may have inhibited them from facing facts, as well as driven them to aggression. Or, more rationally, there were those who felt that any concession to Hindu India would in any case eventuate in their doom; and that

therefore resistance, at whatever cost, could not be wrong. Also, there was present that curious confusion between the moral and material strength of Islam which besets many Muslims.

However it may have arisen, the Muslims' *hybris*, the overweening pride that led them to extravagant folly, brought them, as in a Greek drama, to disaster. That their fate was to some degree deserved, their suffering therefore self-inflicted, is integral to the tragedy.